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June 2, 1964

Secretary Freeman Announces USDA Monitoring Program

Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman today announced a new monitoring program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to determine scientifically if significant environmental hazards are resulting from normal agricultural use of pesticides.

At the same time the Secretary said that recent public hearings conducted by the Department did not substantiate assumptions that recent fish kills in the lower Mississippi resulted from the use of pesticides on farms.

"In the lower Mississippi River fish kill, intensive investigation has pointed the finger to far more concentrated sources of the pesticides than farms," he declared. "Surveys by USDA, State Departments of Agriculture, the Public Health Service and local authorities showed in this case that a major source of pesticide residues was an industrial plant manufacturing the chemicals."

Immediately following the Mississippi River incident, Mr. Freeman said USDA held hearings in Washington, Memphis and Baton Rouge between April 9 and April 23 to determine whether endrin - the pesticide reported to be involved in the fish kill - should be withdrawn from agricultural use along with two similar pesticides, aldrin and dieldrin. In addition, USDA has had available evidence presented at a 4-state conference in New Orleans.

"None of the evidence presented either at the hearings or at the conference was scientifically adequate, in the judgment of USDA, to justify withdrawal of endrin, aldrin or dieldrin from farm use," Secretary Freeman said.

"The field monitoring program announced today will develop further information on a scientific basis as to whether the normal use of pesticides on farms and forests does or does not constitute a significant source of contamination of crops, of water in agricultural areas, or a hazard to wildlife resources.

"This program is being started coincident with the beginning of the growing season which is just getting underway."

USDA's monitoring will be coordinated with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Department of Interior, and other Government agencies through the Federal Pest Control Review Board, and is in line with a recommendation by the President's Science Advisory Committee.

Five teams of USDA scientists, each headed by an entomologist, already are at work monitoring pesticide residues in five study areas along the lower Mississippi River and its tributaries. Additional teams and study areas will be designated as the program proceeds.

The 3-man field teams will take periodic samples in one-square-mile areas. Every area will include at least one stream or other drainage such as a pond or slough. Samples will include soil, silt, runoff and well or cistern water, insects, wildlife, crops and other plant life, and fish. The teams also will count animal, fish and insect populations periodically to determine whether significant changes have occurred.

Laboratories staffed with chemists and other technicians will analyze the samples taken by field teams. Levels of pesticides in water, soil, crops, farm animals, and wildlife will be determined, and periodic changes recorded.

Representative areas will be chosen based on: (1) amount of pesticides used, (2) kinds of pesticides used, (3) kinds of crops and intensity of crop culture, and (4) sensitive areas involved such as number of dairies or cattle farms, drainage area for important water sources, or important fish and game area.

Field stations will be set up to supervise the monitoring in a given region. They will be staffed by chemists, toxicologists, entomologists or other biological scientists and technicians.

State Departments of Agriculture are cooperating in the monitoring program. The monitor findings will be used in carrying on pesticide research and regulatory control.

Released A.M. June 2.



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AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS DIVISION

June 12, 1964

Dear Sir:

In connection with the recent publicity our products aldrin, dieldrin, and endrin have received concerning the lower Mississippi River fish kill, we are pleased to inform you of a late development in this regard.

Secretary of Agriculture, Orville S. Freeman, announced Tuesday, June 2, that none of the evidence presented at the U.S. Department of Agriculture hearings held in Washington, D.C., Memphis, Tennessee, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, between April 9 and 23, was scientifically adequate in the judgement of the U.S.D.A. to justify withdrawal of aldrin, dieldrin, or endrin from farm use.

At the same time, Secretary Freeman announced a U.S.D.A. sponsored monitoring program to develop further information on a scientific basis as to whether normal use of pesticides on farms or forests does or does not constitute a significant source of contamination of crops and water in agricultural areas, or a hazard to wildlife sources.

We have attached a complete copy of the Secretary Freeman's announcement to the press.

Very truly yours,

M. M. Lowish
District Manager

Attachment

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JUN 17 1964

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